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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
9 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina
(As of 1600 EDST)
No. 7

CAMBODIA

The Tactical Situation

1. The erosion of Phnom Penh's outer defenses has now reached the point where a major Khmer Communist penetration and/or a general collapse of Cambodian army units could occur with little warning. Khmer Communist forces late yesterday made their closest advance yet to Pochentong airport by forcing government units to abandon a village only four miles from the airfield. Although only rocket and artillery rounds landed near Pochentong today, the captured village is within recoilless rifle range of the airport terminal and control tower. Counterattacking government troops failed to retake the village last night, and US defense attaches report that government units in the area are stretched thin.

2. The Communists yesterday opened a new gap in the defense line six miles north of the airfield following the unauthorized withdrawal of a government unit.

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3. The Communists are also keeping relentless pressure on government units on the east bank of the Mekong River near Phnom Penh. Government holdings in the area have now been reduced to a relatively small enclave directly opposite the city and a few other isolated positions. Recoilless rifle or mortar fire from

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State Department review
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[REDACTED]

the east bank has begun hitting near Phnom Penh's waterfront.

4. In the countryside, government troops are now fighting well at Kompong Speu, and the threat to the town appears to be easing. Ground action has also slackened around Prey Veng, although the town itself was the target of insurgent shellings early this morning.

Evacuation Status

5. A late report from the US Embassy indicates that 67 US government employees and 84 private US citizens remain in Phnom Penh. The evacuation list also includes 12 third-country nationals and approximately 600 Cambodians. Some 260 Cambodians departed aboard US charter aircraft today.

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Plans to Attack Saigon

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8. The Communists may be planning to attack Saigon defenses soon.

[redacted] a three pronged assault is supposed to be launched against the capital sometime during the first half of April, but not later than the 15th.

9. One spearhead is to attack from the west along Route 1 toward Tan Son Nhut airport. Sapper elements and independent regiments under the command of COSVN are to constitute this attacking force. A second group, composed of units from the 5th Division, are to attack from the south along Route 4. The strongest spearhead, from the 7th Division with help from an unspecified number of COSVN infantry, armor and artillery reserve units, is to attack from the north along Route 1.

10. Prior to the start of the assaults, Viet Cong cadre in Saigon are to "create disorder and confusion" among the population. [redacted] some of the techniques used at Da Nang will be employed. Individuals disguised as police or government security units, for example, may broadcast claims that the Communists are on the outskirts of the city and that people should begin to evacuate.

11. There has been other and more reliable information that the Communists plan "at the right time" to attack Saigon, but that such attacks would likely come after provinces surrounding the capital have been "liberated."

12. It is doubtful that between now and the next six days, the Communists will feel their forces are strong enough in the area to conduct an all-out assault against the capital. While Communist forces are deployed roughly in the areas described [redacted] as the three principal attack routes, they probably will wait until additional units arrive from the north before considering such a move. The Communists would be in a strong enough position to attack Saigon by the end of this month.

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The Military Situation Near Saigon

13. Communist forces launched several sharp local attacks on the approaches to Saigon early today. The most serious was a heavy shelling and ground assault against Xuan Loc city, less than 40 miles east of the capital. Units from the North Vietnamese 6th Division penetrated the city's defenses and established positions in the market. Elements of the North Vietnamese 341st Division, which recently arrived in the area from North Vietnam, could be joining the 6th; two prisoners taken in Xuan Loc claim they are from the 341st.

14. Regional commanders reacted quickly and moved units of the South Vietnamese 18th Division from several field positions in Long Khanh Province, and they brought in reinforcements from Tay Ninh Province and from Saigon. Although government forces have driven the attackers from the city, sharp communist attacks nearby have resulted in the loss of several important tactical positions, including some high ground overlooking Route 1. If Route 1 can be effectively blocked by the communists between Xuan Loc and Saigon, a large number of government forces would be cut off.

15. A small force belonging to the North Vietnamese 5th Division -- most of which has moved quickly out of the northern delta to the provinces west of Saigon -- apparently attacked the provincial capital of Tan An, its airfield, and stretches of Route 4. The attack was repulsed by government regional forces which reportedly inflicted heavy casualties on the communist force. South Vietnamese 7th Division forces have cleared communist troops from Highway 4, and traffic has resumed.

More Aircraft for the Delta

16. The South Vietnamese Air Force has deployed five A-1 propeller aircraft to Binh Thuy airfield just outside of Can Tho, and five more are due to arrive soon. These aircraft probably were among the operational aircraft evacuated from Pleiku and other abandoned airfields in the north. These aircraft carry a large bomb load and have the ability to loiter over potential targets, making them particularly suitable for ground support. Where these planes are already in action in the delta, the morale of some government ground troops has reportedly risen.

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Communist Nha Trang

17. The communists are expanding their hold over the city of Nha Trang. Their forces are now in complete control of the town and are busy collecting abandoned weapons and equipment. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] at least half of the shops are open, Saigon's currency is still being used, and North Vietnamese flags are flying over all former government civil and military offices.

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